

MID TERM ASSIGNMENT

Tuzk Timur

Treatise of Realism

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‘Tuzk Timur’

Autobiography of Tamerlane; a Treatise of Realism

Abstract. *Amir Timur (b1336-d1405)¹ was a Turk ruler of Central Asia from 1370 onwards; he not only conquered what is today known as Central Asia but also invaded, defeated, dominated and ruled over India, Russia, Syria, Iran, Egypt. He is universally acknowledged as the last great conqueror from Central Asia. His fame and ill fame rests upon his cruelty and mass killings. This paper analyse his Tuzk not only as a autobiography but also asa treatise on realism. It concludes that, Timur is not regarded among the intellectuals and his autobiography is not given due weightage as compare to Nicolai Machiavelli’s work Prince on realism. It seems as if imperialism of literature has been the major reason for this.*

Introduction. Philosophy of History

There are but few and scattered examples of autobiographical literature in antiquity and the Middle Ages.² The art of writing history dates back to 400 B.C. with Herodotus’s *Historia*³, he is regarded both as Father of History and also as father of lies as well. The reason being, that to interpret history is a multi dimensional study, to understand past is a philosophical perspective and as such scholars do have variable opinions about the history. However, the fact remains that without the past books or history, our knowledge about history would have been constructed around weak arguments. Homer’s *Iliad*⁴ and *Odyssey* are two of the earliest source of history, literature and culture. Homer narrates how the war erupted in Greece when ‘Greek having sacked some of the neighbouring town and taken two beautiful captives Chryseis and Briseis.’⁵ This highlight that violence was part of the ancient civilisation, towns were sacked and women taken captives.

Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle , contemplated on the very nature of morality, concept of state and how a just ruler should rule.⁶

¹ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Timur." Encyclopedia Britannica, January 1, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Timur>.

² Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Autobiography." Encyclopedia Britannica, May 27, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/art/autobiography-literature>.

³ Mark, Joshua J. "[Herodotus](#)." *Ancient History Encyclopedia*. Last modified March 27, 2018. <https://www.ancient.eu/herodotus/>.

⁴ Homer *Iliad*, translated by Alexander Pope (London: 1899)

⁵ *Ibid*, p-76, Book I.

⁶ *Dialogues of Plato, Republic* by Plato and Aristotle’s *Politics* are the standard text books on politics and statecraft.

In this back ground, the accounts of past historians and more specifically the autobiographies assumes a greater importance; even among the autobiographies the accounts written by the kings and rulers are more important as they were at the helm of affairs and as such knew the events more closely than the historians. G.W.F.Hegel in his *Philosophy of History*⁷ highlighted various kinds of history and classified them as Original, Reflective, Philosophical histories. There are very few accounts written by kings, among them Ceaser's *Commentaries*⁸ written in 58 BC stands out. Alexander The Great⁹ (356 – 323 BC) was also fond of history and had many historians alongwith him in his campaigns, yet none of those histories survived and neither Alexander himself wrote any account.¹⁰

Amir Timur or Tamerlane (born 1326-1406) was a Turk Mongol¹¹ from Central Asia and his achievements are no less than Alexander or Ceaser and perhaps in modern time none other than Hitler has reached the same pinnacle as Timur; however there is a principal difference between the ancient, medieval and modern times rulers; modern rulers do not physically takes part in physical combat which was hall mark of ancient and medieval rulers.

Aim.

This paper aims at highlighting the unique importance of Tamerlane's Tuzk as a piece of history and also as a treatise of realism. Paper draws comparison between the Tuzk and Ceaser's *Commentaries* and also with Nicolai Machiavelli *The Prince*¹²; in order to establish the importance of Tuzk, as a source of history and treatise on realism.

Amir Timur 'Tamerlane'

Timur was born in nobility, near Samarkand in 1336, his father was a tribal chief under the Chagatai Khanate of Mongols.¹³ To understand the time and space, it is pertinent to have a brief history of Central Asia and specifically that of Mongols. Central Asia was known as TransOxiana by the Greeks, Marwaulnihar by the Arabs and in last century it was called as

⁷ George Friedrich Hegel (1770- 1831) was a German philosopher, his lectures were published in 1830 and first translated in English in 1903. G.W.Hegel *Philosophy of History*,trans; J.Sibree (1902; repr; Ontario: Botochee,2001).

⁸ Julius Casear *The Gallic War* (60BC) translated H.Edwards (London: Heinmann,1889)

⁹ Arrian *Anabasis of Alexander* trans E. Chinnock (London: Hodder & Stoughton,1876).

¹⁰ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Battle of Issus". Encyclopedia Britannica, 3 Apr. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Issus-Persian-history>. Accessed 6 February 2021.

¹¹ Timur or Temur also known more popularly as Tamerlane was a Turkisised Mongol and Tartar. See Justin Marozi *Tamerlane Sword of Islam Conquerer of the world*. (London; Harper Collins, 2005),Note.

¹² Nicollo. Machiavelli, *Art of War* .Translated by Henry Neville. (Chicago: University of Chicago).

¹³ Marozi 'Tamerlane',4-15.

Turkestan and later as Russian and Chinese Turkestan.¹⁴ It is also termed as Geographical Pivot of History too. Little is known about Central Asia, it really came into prominence after the occupation by Arabs (Muslims) who conquered the Persian Empire, under whose sovereignty the area was. Under Arabs, the area which they called 'Beyond the river' referring to the present day Central Asia; this marwaulnahar became the heart of the culture and art. Some of the most prominent Muslim thinkers and scientist having roots in the area rose to prominence. Al-Berouni, Rumi, Ali Sher, Nizami Ganjvi, Imam Bukhari to name few.

Next phase of Central Asia which has a direct impact on the subject of Tuzk Timur took place in 1200 AD with Chingiz Khan and his Mongols emerging from Mongolia (farther north of Syr Darya), ontologically Mongols are very much part of Central Asia. Mongols not only captured and conquered the Central Asia but also China, India, Persia and extended their influence to Africa and Europe. Mongols despite their barbaric cruelty as epistemologically transferred to present era, were also keen lovers of literature specifically History. Chingiz Khan initiated a royal department as part of his court having a duty to compile the history. 'Secret History of Mongols'¹⁵ was compiled with labour and with a research, involving collection of oral history and also compiling everyday life of the Mongol court. Thus, history and its upkeep was very much part of Mongol culture. Chingiz Khan divided his empire among his four sons and it was second son Chughtai who was given the present day Central Asia. Tamerlane was born in the house of a tribal chief who was very much part of the Chughtai Horde. At the time of Timur's birth, the great Mongol Empire was facing crisis due to infighting among the great-grandsons of Khaqan Chingiz Khan.

The Tuzk.

Timur, in the spirit of Mongols, compile his history and it starts with, when he was in his mid twenties and covers the period for next quarter of century. The controversy surrounding the authenticity will be covered later in this paper. However, it must be highlighted that for the purpose of assignment, I have chosen the Urdu version Tuzk Timuri.¹⁶ It is hard bound with 158 pages and includes both the Tuzk and the Commandments of Timur. The autobiography comprises of 72 pages and remaining are the laws and instructions of Amir Timur.

Content and style of the Tuzk Timur is candid, and depicts the inner thoughts of Amir Timur. It highlights his struggle in his youth, how, he made the decisive decision of joining hands with the Chughtai ruling clan of Kashgar. In the same breath, Timur gives reasons as why he opted for this and quotes the historical pledge and pact made in the days of Chingiz Khan regarding as who will be ruling and who will be appointed as the military commander.

¹⁴ Hassan, Dani, *New Light on Central Asia*. (Lahore : Sang-e-Meel.1996),pp,3-17.

¹⁵ Igor Rachewitz *Secret History of Mongols* (Australian National University, 2015).

¹⁶ Syed Abul Hashim Nadvi *Tuzk Timuri* (Lahore; Sang Meel, 2012). It was translated from Persian into Urdu in 1963.

Tuzk , deviates from the standard pattern of an autobiography as there is very little mention about the childhood or about the family, rather it starts with ‘ My principles for ruling the world’ and from this thread it takes the reader into the varying aspects and stages of Timur life and reign. It is not in a chronological manner.

The first part (autobiography) consist of , ‘ My principles of governance’ ‘letter from my peer(sheikh)’ ‘My personal experiences’’ Tughluq Taimor’’ how I got the Kingship’ ‘ Fighting against Uzbecks’ ‘ attack on Samarkand’ ‘ My belief on Holy Koran’’ account of amir Hussain ‘ he was Timur’s brother in law and later Timur narrates how he had to kill him in order to safeguard his power. ‘ conquest of Fars (Iran) and Iraq’ ‘ campaign in India’ ‘ Conquest of Egypt and Syria’ are some of the major headlines and focus of Tuzk.

Second part deals with the laws, constitution, rules and advices to his heir. This section of Tuzk is perhaps more interesting and gives an insight into the very mind of Timur. His instructions and facilities as he mentioned , for business and agriculture is worth highlighting.’ I have ordered that if any trader lost his baggage, it should be replenished....if a farmer is having a bad crop than he should be compensated.’¹⁷

Amir Timur fame is as military commander thus it is no surprise that major portion of his ‘advices’ deals with the army , its training, induction, promotion, pay and allowances, discipline, tactics and command structure. This aspect of tuzk makes it a classic and put it at par with any other literature on the subject including Sun Zu’s *Art of War* and Publius Flavius Vegetius *Epitome rel Militaire*.¹⁸

Crime and their punishment occupies a good portion of Timur’s philosophy of reign. There is an elaborate protocol highlighted and stated by Timur, down to who will stand and who will occupy the chair and their specific places. Moreover Timur at the end also pays special attention on the art of warfare , by elaborating his core principle of avoiding any battle in which he is not sure of a victory.

Religion and its impact on Timur

Amir Timur from his Tuzk appears to be a highly religious person , a man who seeks guidance from his Allah , respects religious teachers, highlights with pride the letters he received from his Sheikh (peer) and throughout the Tuzk , there are passages in which , he is attributing his victories to the Allah.

In the same context, the respect and reverence shown to the religious people is quite obvious from the very list drawn by him , in which among the ‘twelve groups’ of people , he has categorised, to whom, Timur respected and looked forward in his court, the scholars were given the highest rank; a rather unusual phenomena for a ruler of medieval era.

¹⁷ Ibidid, page 85-86.

¹⁸ Sun T Zu *Art of War* dates back to 5th Century BC and Flavius *Epitome* is about Roman Military and dates to 383 AD.

Timur a Realist

Amir Timur from his own accounts, emerges as a man who is a realist, who believes ‘every thing is fair in war and power’. Timur, very categorically states that, ‘in an kingdom, there can be only one ruler and none should be allowed even to create an impression among the public as that, power is being shared.’ On the warfare, again, Timur admits that, he has no ethics when it comes to the warfare. Deception was his masterstroke, he would carryout feint retreat ad then attack.

Western Civilisation opinion about Tuzk Timur

There are two distinct school of thoughts regarding Amir Timur that exists among western civilisation. To some , Timur was the scrouge , an evil on earth, a man void of all feelings, a barbarian who would kill even small children for the sake of pleasure, a man who had no soft feelings of any sort. The other school of thought and mainly led by the British officers in 1800s onwards regards Timur as a ruler who as a necessity had to resort to terror as aws prevalent at that time, this school of thought highlights the cultural patronage of Timur as a evidence of his being a humane. There is a famous drama Tamburlaine written by Christopher Marlowe in 1587 ; the drama’s scarlet thread is the Timur and a tragic end is the end of the drama, Timur kills his own son in mistake. The drama is regarded as classic among English dramas of all time. Drama itself is based upon Pedro Mexica a Spanish’s Collection of Histories.¹⁹ In America, Edgar Alan Poe wrote a poem on Tamerlane in 1840, which was discovered years later in a barn.²⁰

Tuzk or Timur was first introduced to the Western Europe by Gottlib who translated Ibn Arab Shah’s *Wonders of the Creation* in 1636. Ibn Arab Shah by himself has a story, he was taken as captive by the amir Timur during Syrian campaign and he remined part of the court. However his account, which by any standard is the most primary , suffers from one glaring fact that Ibn Arab Shah has spared no words to show his contempt for the late Timur. It is Arab Shah who narrated that Timur got a lame while stealing goats.²¹ ‘The birth place of this deceiver (Timur)was a village of a lord named Tigar’.²² Thus because of this book the image of Tamerlane has been convoluted in history. Peter De la Croix, translated it into French in 1722 and from it into English by John Darby in 1723. In 1783 , Professor White at Oxford translated the Timur’s Institute in Persian and in 1787 they were translated into

¹⁹ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Tamburlaine the Great". Encyclopedia Britannica, 21 Nov. 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tamburlaine-the-Great>. Accessed 7 March 2021.

²⁰ Edgar Alan Poe *Tamerlane* <https://poets.org/poem/tamerlane>

²¹ Ibn Arab Shah *Tamerlane or Timur The Great Amir*, translated from Arabic into English by J.Sanders. (Lahore: Progressive,1936).PP,1-33.

²² Ibid.

English.²³ Major Charles Stewart highlighted that numerous mistakes took place while translating it into French.

Critique of Tuzk Timur

Amir Timur is one of the greatest military and political commander and ruler of the Asia. From his own account, he appears to be a normal man, one who believed in his destiny, took risk and in return started having faith in his own invincibility. A man, who was superstitious, courteous, brave, one who follows customs and traditions, cultured and in the same vein, ruthless but not barbaric.

In the light of Historicism, the very first question is about the authenticity of the manuscript. The fact remains, that in our present era, we are accepting old texts without any major scientific validity; for instance, although Timur's corpse was put through scientific analysis in 1941, by the Russians to evaluate the folk lore of his being lame. The laboratory tests confirmed that he was having a lame,²⁴ even Timur himself admitted in his account regarding the arrow being shot in his leg during the siege of Kabul. No, similar effort has been undertaken to analyse the text, the age, ink, writing style, handwriting analysis to confirm whether the text is original in age; the hypothesis that it has been written personally by Timur is weak, as Timur never went to any madrasah to learn reading or writing. At that time and space, it was most uncommon for the tribal chieftain children to learn writing. Moreover, there is no other record of any manuscript ever written by Amir Timur.

Most likely, Timur dictated the accounts, it must be kept in mind that Mongols were very particular in maintaining court histories, thus it is most likely that this account was written as part of court history. The next question that arises is regarding the preservation of the manuscript through the turbulent period that followed after the death of Timur's son Miran Shah who succeeded his father.

Conclusion.

Amir Timur's Tuzk is still an enigma in respect of its authenticity, yet, when seen through critical thinking, it is regarded as authentic as other works of that era and past like Greek histories and works. Arrian, wrote almost 300 years after the death of Alexander The Great regarding his campaigns. We accept the speech of Socrates in the court in totality as given by Plato or the works of Roman Caesar, thus applying the same rationality on Tuzk of Amir Timur, there is no other option but to accept the current manuscript as acceptable knowledge. Uzbekistan celebrates Amir Timur as national hero and one hopes that they will

²³ William Davy writing in the preface of *Mulfuzat TTimury or Autobiographical memoirs of Moghul Emperor Timur*. Translated by Major Charles Stewart. (Calcutta: Government Press, 1830). Preface.

²⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-20538810> <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-20538810>

conduct some scientific research on the manuscript to give it an official stamp of approval. The irony in such exercise if conducted in isolation is the apprehension that , those contents that brings any cloud of disrespect to Uzbecks will be omitted.

In Pakistan , Amir Timur is regarded with a soft image, he is treated as a religious warrior who conducted his campaigns in the name of Islam and thus this purify all his actions. Yet, Amir Timur is not afforded the same elation and veneration as afforded to Muhammad Bin Qasim or Mahmood of Ghazna. There is no military medal or institution named after Amir Timur in Pakistan Army, there is no road in any city of Pakistan that reminds people about this warrior.

In order to foster connectivity with Central Asia and more specifically with Uzbekistan, there is a need to project Amir Timur among the new generation of Pakistan, Timur should be accorded the same status as afforded to Alexander The Great, because Timur was no less than Alexander. Amir Timur should be part of our history curriculum in schools and his philosophy and thoughts on warfare and government are as valid today as they were 600 years ago..

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